

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 25, wherein the causing of step (b) is continued until a predetermined temperature is reached.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the predetermined temperature is sustained for a predetermined period of time, prior to step (c).
4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 25, wherein the causing of step (b) occurs until any discomfort in the suspected area decreases to a predetermined level.
5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 25, wherein the assessing comprises evaluating a subject's level of discomfort.
6. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 5;~~ A method for inhibiting infection, comprising:  
(a) disposing a surface of a heat transfer element in close proximity to a suspected area of infection;  
(b) causing a rapid temperature change in a suspected area of infection,  
(c) discontinuing the causing of the rapid temperature change; and  
(d) assessing the suspected area for occurrence of infection, wherein the assessing comprises evaluating a subject's level of discomfort, and wherein treatment is terminated if the evaluating indicates a rapid increase in discomfort followed by a gradual decrease in discomfort.
7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] 25, further comprising repeating steps (a) – (d) if the assessing in step (d) indicates that infection may still occur.
8. (Cancelled)
9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, wherein the thermal energy source forms an integral unit with the heat transfer element.

10. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, wherein the surface of the heat transfer element is configured to a shape of a target area.
11. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, further comprising a temperature detector.
12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the temperature detector regulates activation of the thermal energy source.
13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, further comprising at least one selected from an input and an output, for communicating with at least one other device.
14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, further comprising an insulating element.
15. (Cancelled)
16. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, wherein the thermal energy source is separately replaceable.
17. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[8]] 26, wherein the thermal energy source includes an input for renewal of at least one component of the thermal energy source.
18. (Cancelled)
19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[18]] 20, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus once a treatment criteria is met.
20. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 18;~~ A method for using an apparatus for inhibiting infection, comprising:  
positioning a surface of a heat transfer element in close proximity to a suspected area of  
infection; and  
activating the apparatus to cause a rapid temperature change in the suspected area of  
infection, wherein the activating is initiated by a temperature detector.

21. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[18]]~~ 20, wherein the activating occurs for a predetermined period.
22. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[18]]~~ 20, wherein the activating is initiated by one or more external devices in communication with the apparatus.
23. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[18]]~~ 20, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus based on reaching a predetermined temperature in a target area.
24. (Currently Amended) The method of claim ~~[[18]]~~ 20, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus based once a predetermined temperature of a target area is maintained for a predetermined amount of time.
25. (Currently Amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method for inhibiting infection, comprising:
  - (a) disposing a surface of a heat transfer element in close proximity to a suspected area of infection;
  - (b) causing a rapid temperature change in a suspected area of infection, wherein the rapid temperature change comprises a rapid cooling;
  - (c) discontinuing the causing of the rapid temperature change; and
  - (d) assessing the suspected area for occurrence of infection.
26. (Currently Amended) ~~The apparatus of claim 8;~~ An apparatus for inhibiting infection, comprising:
  - a heat transfer element having a surface configured to be positioned in close proximity to a suspected area of infection;
  - a positioning element; and
  - a thermal energy source for altering a temperature of the surface of the heat transfer element until a predetermined temperature is reached, wherein the predetermined temperature is a temperature that is lower than an initial temperature of the suspected area of infection.